COURSES & WORKSHOPS

Digital Influence & Perceptions
Head of Specialization: Dr. Moran Yarchi

2022-2023
Our world has changed dramatically in recent years. The emergence of social networks has altered the way people interact with one another and has provided individuals and organizations with the opportunity to access millions of potential audiences in order to advance their goals. Social media consumers are flooded with information including fake news (and deep fake). This often makes it challenging for them to identify and decide between reliable information and misinformation and it is difficult to trust the information they are exposed to.

In today’s media landscape, many influence operations are carried out daily in the digital realm in various spheres including the social, political, military, and public spheres. Take for example Greta’s campaign to promote environmental issues, the Russian intervention in the United States elections, the Ukrainian activity in the field of perceptions during the conflict with Russia, ISIS’s theater of terror campaigns, or the fake news surrounding the issue of COVID-19 vaccines. In such a reality, one must understand the complexities and develop tools for dealing with this new situation. This is precisely what we do in the Digital Influence & Perceptions Specialization.

Our students study and practice strategic communication and cross-platform content creation – with an emphasis on creating and producing visual content (the most effective tool to influence audiences), conveying messages to diverse target audiences, and managing online communities – all the while identifying and understanding target audiences, platforms and the most effective way to create an impact. The students will gain experience in various projects whilst being mentored by senior practitioners from the industry, and see, in real-time, the impact they create in the social or political public sphere. During their third year, the students will choose to work on one of three projects in the Influence Lab: Content Creation – Research, Produce & Measure; Impact – from Hashtag to Movement; or Cross-Platform Investigative Journalism, and apply the tools they acquired during the theoretical courses and practical workshops. Upon graduation, students will prepare a professional portfolio that will pave their way to be integrated in key positions in prominent companies and organizations in the Israeli and international markets.
Theoretical courses

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Influence & Perceptions
Daniel Cohen

The issue of influence and especially influence operations has become a top priority for countries and organizations in recent years, as it poses a true challenge in the current digital reality. A series of attacks and threats on political institutions, corporations, and financial institutions around the world has further emphasized the importance of the issue. During the Influence & Perceptions class, we will focus on acquiring the needed knowledge in the field of influence and perceptions while presenting different tools to cope with this new reality. The class is designed to expand the students’ knowledge regarding the cyber world, strategic communications, psychological warfare, and influence operations. We will review current opportunities and trends in the field, alongside an in-depth understanding of the risks and threats, while obtaining tools that will help deal with influence operations and disinformation. We will examine the coping methods of various organizations, the typology of attackers, common types of attacks, case analysis, and best practices. Some of the topics we will discuss include: cyber warfare and influence operations, governments and civil society defense efforts, standardization, regulation, and privacy policies, state decision-making processes for risks associated with influence operations. The students will also be provided with practical "Open Source Intelligence” and "Social Media Intelligence” collection and analytic tools.

Media Audiences: Uses, Interpretation, and Influence
Dr. Keren Tzur-Eyal

The course will survey the types and roles of the audiences of the different mass media, traditional and new, as well as the processes of reception and effects of the content of different media on the audience. Among the different topics, the course will address: different characterizations of audiences, the characteristics of the active audience, the relationships audiences form with characters and personalities presented in the media, and the social context of media exposure and its effects. The course will address a wide range of media, both traditional and new.
Rhetoric and Communication
Dr. Rachel Quastel

In the seminar, we will investigate intersections of rhetoric and communication in contemporary cultural and social fields, with an emphasis on the study of politics, popular culture, visual and social media. We will recognize dominant ideologies and biases in discursive and visual arenas and analyze the rhetorical strategies used to propagate them. We will discuss the impact of post-modern thought, with its alternate views of truth, on modern communication. We will also examine the characteristics of media research. The course is designed to provide a broad understanding of rhetorical appeals and their function in shaping our contemporary cultural and social consciousness.

Content Creation for Viralization in Social Networks: Implementation and analysis
Prof. Tal Samuel-Azran

In a reality in which various actors are trying to promote messages and agendas in the online realm, the question of which contents style is more likely to gain virality on online social networks is the subject of many analyses in content management studies. This unique seminar aims to teach the main models linked to virality identified by leading scholars and then analyze their validity in different contexts using a novel method. Throughout the seminar, students create a social media account with the aim to gain some virality and the account data is subsequently analyzed to test the validity of leading virality models (such as Berger’s STEPPS virality model). The research paper then integrates it all together towards a meaningful contribution to contemporary viral content literature.
Media and Conflicts in the Digital Age
Dr. Moran Yarchi

21st century conflicts are being fought on both the military and the media battlefields, and actors can no longer prevail solely by militarily overpowering their adversaries. By receiving favorable media coverage, actors can gain public support, which can result in the creation of positive policies towards them and enables them to achieve their goals. The “image war,” in which each side in the conflict attempts to justify their ideas, beliefs, and actions, represents an important front in the comprehensive struggle between antagonists.

The course deals with the different aspects of the media’s coverage of conflicts in general, and asymmetric conflicts (and terrorism) in particular, providing the students with a deep understanding regarding the notion of newsworthiness, the coverage of conflicts on the national and international arenas, and the interaction between terrorism and the media. The learning process is done through the usage of case study analyses and examples of current world occurrences.
Challenges and Opportunities of the Online Realm
Sigalit Maor

Digital and information technologies, data, and algorithms increasingly impact multiple aspects of democracy and society. From an interdisciplinary perspective, this course focuses on the structure, power, and social dynamics in (and of) cyberspaces and their effects on nation-states, particularly in democratic regimes and civil societies. Such dynamics challenge institutions’ traditional political and societal structures and are the core of social change, changing practices, behavior, and awareness of individuals, collectives, businesses, and societies. This course will delve into the various topics’ perspectives of challenges and opportunities.

Here are some key questions we will discuss in class: What are the power relations between the leading stakeholders in the information era – tech giants, governments, users? How do fake news, misinformation, and other (social) media manipulations affect election processes? What steps can democracies take to minimize foreign intervention in elections? What role do social media play in mobilizing collective action and social phenomena, such as protests, terrorism, etc.? Are we witnessing the return of the Cold war between East and West over the 5G topic? What kind of societal and ethical challenges does artificial intelligence present, and how can we address them?
The significance of new media in this day and age cannot be ignored and with its growth, there is also a need for the academia world to evolve and teach students not only how to conduct reliable academic research, but also how to translate the main findings of research into policy suggestions and new media products, in order to make a real impact. Based on this notion, the unique, annual RPD project (Research, Policy, Digital) was developed.

During this innovative project and through hands-on experience, students will learn how to utilize academic knowledge and research and translate it cohesively into the public, business, and digital worlds. The students will conduct research in the realm of political communication, and in addition to a seminar paper, they will write a policy paper (in order to learn how to influence decision-makers) and create an online campaign in an attempt to influence the public.
Media use is a central leisure activity for children and adolescents. This seminar will employ a developmental lens to examine the link between young audiences and the media. Through examining central theories, research studies, and common methodologies, the seminar will review the unique characteristics of youth as media audiences, their media exposure and consumption habits, central content to which they are exposed (for example, violent content, advertising, and educational content), audience effects (for example, fright reactions and the construction of identity), and the importance of parental mediation of media exposure, interventions, and media literacy programs in mitigating the effects on children and adolescents. Students will conduct an original seminar research on the topic.
SECOND YEAR

Mandatory Workshops

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New-fluencers

These days, many consider themselves to be influencers or content creators, but not all are equally successful in the task. If you want to become a successful Newfluentcer and promote social change or global causes in various fields (such as: the war against antisemitism, discrimination, sustainability, entertainment and culture), while collaborating with different organizations – this hands-on workshop will teach you the skills and secrets of becoming an impactful influencer, understanding the new world and its changing needs. The workshop will help you build and shape your personal brand and become a pro. During the workshop you will acquire skills in various fields, among them are: creating content to engage your audience; gathering a massive social media following; understanding the nuances of brand-influencer collaborations; building and maintaining a distinct personal brand; how to avoid the common influencer mistakes; and managing online reputation and grow your brand. Throughout the semester the students will create content and visual messages, practice the secrets of non-verbal communication, and receive on-camera presentation tips. The original work created by the students throughout the workshop can be included in their portfolios.

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We live in an era in which we are exposed to the bombardment of information in various fields; social, political, military, and public. The information the audience is exposed to carries within it the interests and agendas of specific individuals, organizations or political parties. It is, therefore, more important than ever to also know how to advance ideas or organizations that work for the greater social good.

In the Strategic Communication: from Creation to Impact workshop, students will learn how to lead and create a credible and relevant content strategy, with emphasis on creating and producing visual messages that currently makeup over 80 percent of online traffic. The work process will be based on building goals and objectives, identifying and understanding the target audiences, platforms, and the right way to build a digital campaign to create impact organically. We all love consuming videos online. It excites us, makes us laugh, and affects us. Likes, shares, and comments on Social Networks create a sense of satisfaction, visibility, and sometimes excitement. But only a clear goal and a built-in plan that will create value for users/customers/consumers in a systematic way – will bring about the desired change and lead to the desired results in the field. Raising awareness, recruiting support, recruiting employees, raising funds, information about a new service/product for a particular community, and more. As part of the workshop, students will use the tools learned to produce a digital campaign for nonprofit organizations.
In today’s world, the ability to create a political or social impact is no longer based solely on policies or ideals, but on the stories you tell to make them known. Storytelling isn’t just an overused buzzword, it’s a key skill for today’s influencers, thought leaders, and activists. Those with unique positions within their various organizations are often required to engage with various audiences and present an idea, a technology, and important messages. There’s nothing more engaging, more memorable, and therefore, more strategic, than a story. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video’s worth is immeasurable. Done well, it’s the ultimate format to engage both people and search engines. As we all go through digital transformation, producing and distributing videos is easier than ever. It’s going ‘viral’ that’s the challenge.

This workshop provides theoretical knowledge and practical tools which empower participants to deliver messages effectively and capture the hearts and minds of various target audiences. The workshop includes a presentation/discussion dedicated to helping identify, develop, and adapt key messages into a format suitable for any target audience and cross-cultural consumption, and to marry them into effective stories. Throughout the workshop, we will develop skills and practice effective communication strategies.
Advanced Video Production

Video content has become central in people’s lives, with many owning multiple screens (mobile phones, tablets, computers, etc.). As such, the ability to build, acquire, and utilize an understanding of the video production process is significant. Cinematography and video editing are languages used to convey messages and ideas that aim to reach various audiences, stimulate, and influence them.

This workshop is designed to provide students with the required professional skills of visual content creation in various genres. Throughout the workshop, students will learn the various production roles both in front of and behind the camera as well as advance their editing skills whilst using Adobe Premier Software (the professional software used in the industry today).
Third Year

3 Elective Workshops

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Foundations to Community Management

The world of online communities had evolved dramatically in recent years, serving a central role in the business world as well as in non-profits and other organizations aiming to set agendas. The purpose of this workshop is to train students to create and manage online communities on social media platforms, aiming to mobilize users and create an impact.

The students will learn the fundamentals of a community, starting by locating its value point, characterizing its potential members, optional platforms for community management, measuring the community success, and more. The workshop includes lectures, group discussions, and practical work. Students will learn how to produce content that encourages active online and offline participation, how to motivate and engage users, and how to build and maintain an online community. At the end of the workshop, students build a full community management strategy for a social community of their choice.
As Virtual Reality (VR) takes the attention of more and more digital studios, journalists, and social organizations, this workshop will focus specifically on VR’s abilities to place the viewers at the center of the story, making them feel like part of the content presented. We will learn about the works of the New York Times, The Guardian, BBC, Frontline, and others in the realm of VR, alongside powerful social and political VR experiences that aim to change our perception of reality.

While being mentored throughout the whole process – writing, production, and editing – students will explore this exciting new medium and will be ready for these fast changes in which new technologies provide us with new visions of the world.
TikTok was initially perceived as a young and fun platform primarily used by teenagers who published short videos of themselves dancing. This is no longer the case, and today we are witnessing a fast-growing flow of social, political, and commercial content on this platform. In addition, content creators and journalists are starting to use TikTok and other venues to reach a broader range of audiences, create engagement, and bring about change.

In the TikTok Journos workshop, we will focus on advanced content creation for digital platforms – learning the skills required to design, develop and create a complete experience targeting a specific audience while focusing on creative storytelling. We will produce content, examine new formats, and learn the needed skills to convey a message (on and off camera). In this hands-on workshop, we will learn about the power of effective digital content and how to encourage users to interact and engage with our stories and messages as well as share and distribute them further.
Third Year Final projects

The Influence Lab

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Documenting the lives of others is an unexpected journey. Telling the stories of the silenced, of the underprivileged, uncovering those stories left untold or hidden, is more than merely an opportunity or an honor; it can be one’s life mission. Documentaries are moving, compelling, entertaining, and funny, equally if not more so, than fiction, as they are made from the fabric of ‘real’ life. In the 21st century, those who produce interesting and innovative content and stories have the potential to shape the agenda ‘de jour’. As such, this workshop will focus on storytelling based on documentary content told using a wide variety of platforms: documentary web series, documentary films, documentary television series, and documentary cross-platform projects. Stories that aim to document reality, mold it, change it, influence it, through the medium as well as through the content. In addition, we will examine the documentarist’s place in dealing with social, cultural, and political issues and explore the extent to which the camera affects the documented reality. This workshop develops different approaches to documentary storytelling, research, fieldwork, directing, photography, editing, and other practical aspects of production. We will focus particular attention on finding the correct platforms for the created documentary content. This workshop will combine lectures and fieldwork, structuring and reviewing the participants’ working process – from research to scripting, shooting, and editing.
Engaging audiences via strategic communication, to promote agendas and goals. In recent years, the ability of social networks to influence our lives and shape perceptions in diverse fields has been repeatedly seen. As part of the annual Impact Project, students will initiate, build, and manage an extensive online campaign, promoting a social cause, based on the knowledge and skills they had acquired in the different specialization classes and workshops.

Different tools will assist them in promoting their cause: strategic communication, community building, content creation, video production, activism, journalistic research, the creation and promotion of messages, creativity, selecting the right platforms to create impact, blocking messages, and mobilization of users. As part of the project, the students create an online community of activists who share the desire to advance a social cause and influence international public opinion, using diverse tools and tackling the challenges posed by the online space.
The yearlong workshop, focusing on Investigative Journalism, builds on your knowledge acquired during the basic 1st and 2nd-year courses. The workshop exposes students to the fascinating world of journalism in the digital era. It offers the students a unique opportunity to learn from and work with leading professionals in the journalism field and produce high-end investigative projects. The workshop targets students who wish to acquire a deep understanding and practical experience of in-depth investigative journalism.

During the first semester, the students will receive the theoretical foundation – focusing on how to build an in-depth story, conduct relevant research, find sources, conduct professional interviews, and build a journalistic narrative that will fit different media platforms. During the second semester, the students will practice their skills. Lecturers will become mentors and personally guide the students through their individual investigative projects – assist them in conducting their research, seeking credible sources, conducting interviews, and building a coherent narrative. The mentors will guide the students individually throughout the semester to create high-quality projects that might be published on written or video platforms. The subjects for the investigative piece differ and are chosen by the students – social matters, environmental issues, bureaucracy, injustice, etc.
“Genius is in the idea. Impact, however, comes from action.”

Simon Sinek